executive of Texaco Inc. ''But an earthquake on the San Andreas Fault is more apt to happen than a disruption in oil.''

Is that confidence overdone?

Saudi Arabia is still vital to feed the world's growing appetite for oil, which now totals about 62 million barrels a day. It accounts for a little more than 8 million of the 17 million barrels of oil that flow from the Middle East. And even though output outside the Middle East has been growing, there is not enough reserve capacity to fill the void if Saudi supplies are disrupted.

''The world needs Saudi Arabia,'' said John H. Lichtblau, the chairman of the Petroleum Industry Research Foundation, a private research group. In the event of upheaval, the question, Mr. Lichtblau said, is, ''Will you be killed or just be hurt?''

Experts like Mr. Lichtblau offer the consoling thought that history demonstrates that even the most disruptive political events are unlikely to keep the crude oil from pumping for long.

Vahan Zanoyan, senior director of a private consulting firm in Washington, the Petroleum Finance Company, generally agrees. He recently warned in an article in Foreign Affairs magazine that Saudi Arabia's leaders were frozen in time and had shown little inclination to respond to the decade-old drop in oil prices by reining in spending by the royal family and its entourage of princes, households and hangers-on.

''If in the next three to four years the Saudi Government resists reforms,'' he said in an interview, ''you will see more often the types of riots and civil unrest partly caused by economic concerns and the rise of more Islamic movements. The oil markets in the world will not watch this kind of thing with detachment.''

Yet even under the worst view—in which a fundamentalist Islamic group seizes power in Saudi Arabia—the new government will only hurt itself if it cuts off the supply of oil for a sustained period. ''Sooner or later,'' he said, ''the new leaders would have to export oil.''

The best protection against a temporary cutoff in supplies lies in the United States Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which holds about 600 million barrels, enough to meet America's needs for 90 to 120 days. But growing complacency about the risk of another oil shock is leading some lawmakers to look at the reserve as a source of revenue today rather than an insurance policy for tomorrow. Senate Republicans have proposed selling 39 million barrels from the reserve to help reduce the budget deficit. And most companies have cut their own inventories of oil, leaving the nation with a smaller margin of protection.

There is also little will on the part of the public, political leaders or the oil industry to lessen the vulnerability by increasing conservation or supporting alternative energy sources.

''At the moment we're just letting things drift,'' said James R. Schlesinger, Energy Secretary under President Jimmy Carter, ''when we should be alert to finding possible contingencies.''

In the event of a crisis, the most likely outcome, many experts say, will not be a complete shutoff but the risk that any new leadership will decide to sacrifice maximum income for a while, cutting production over time in a bid to push up prices.

But not everybody is so confident that the worst can be avoided. Milton Copulos, president of the National Defense Council Foundation, a conservative group in Washington, raised the possibility of an oil crisis at Congressional hearings last year. ''The optimists assume that the Arabs are exclusively motivated by economics,'' Mr. Copulos said. ''The Ayotollah Khomeini was not motivated by economics. Other militants are not motivated by economics.''

Ultimately, of course, there is always the option of military force.

Walter E. Boomer, the president of the Babcock & Wilcox Generation Group and a former Marine Corps lieutenant general who was involved in the Persian Gulf war, said the United States had already demonstrated its commitment during the war to defend Western interests in the Middle East.

''If the country is threatened,'' he said, ''we would make that commitment again.''

INTERNATIONAL DRUG CERTIFICATION

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I rise to draw a line—a line that divides our nation from those countries who have fallen prey to the obscene influence of international drug cartels.

This week, the President will offer his decision—drawing his line—about which countries have cooperated sufficiently with United States counternarcotics efforts to justify all the benefits of a full partnership with our Nation. This year, some of our neighbors have crossed the line and should not be ''certified'' as fully cooperating with the U.S. drug enforcement effort. Others of our neighbors are coming perilously close to crossing this line.

Before offering my specific views on which countries I believe have crossed this line, I want to offer my general views of this drug certification process. Foremost, the certification process does not seek to shift the full blame for the drug scourge solely to the drug-producing and transit countries. In fact, the comprehensive drug strategies I have offered call on the U.S. government and the U.S. people to remain vigilant and committed to attacking the drug problem at home.

But, as I have always recognized, slowing the flow of drugs into the U.S. must be an integral part of a comprehensive drug strategy. And this effort to cut the literally hundreds of tons of drugs flowing toward American shores must be assisted by all countries if they are to continue as our full partners in the family of nations.

Mr. President, let me make it real simple—any nation that wishes to enjoy the benefits of American friendship must do everything they can to help America fight the scourge of drugs. This is not an impossible task. We are not being unreasonable. We do not ask that the nations that have literally been held hostage by the drug cartels end the supply of drugs coming from their shores. That would be unreasonable—many of these nations just cannot eliminate all drug cartels, just as we cannot eliminate all of the mafia here in the U.S.

Still, America has the right to ask what is reasonable—no more but also no less. That has been my longstanding test, not only in the area of drug policy but also in other important questions of foreign policy, such as arms control.

To be more specific, I have long believed that a United States policy of support and cooperation with our friends in Latin America is the best way to counter the drug threat. While it might make us feel better, isolation and incrimination of other countries rarely helps us meet our ultimate objectives. Particularly in the drug interdiction task, cooperation and shared intelligence are absolutely essential to an effective strategy because drugs can be hidden in any of the billions of legal containers that cross our border every year. And with no intelligence, we can never hope to stop these drugs.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that cooperation is usually the best policy, there are grave circumstances where both morality and practicality require America to draw the line.

I regret to conclude that for Colombia that line has been crossed. The United States should not certify that Colombia has done everything possible to curb the operations and influence of the illicit drug trade, primarily because of the corruption at the highest levels of the Colombian government.

I also conclude that for Mexico, that line is close to being crossed. This requires the U.S. to send a clear warning—just as we did last year to Colombia. Let me also point out that totally cutting off cooperation could make a bad situation very much worse, and it is simply not in our national interest to do so. Therefore, I recommend that a vital national interest waiver or similarly strong, unambiguous warning be sent to the Mexican government.

Even as I call for our nation to decertify Colombia, I recognize the immense challenges that the drug trade poses in that country. I admire the courage of the men and women in Colombian law enforcement—leaders such as the National Police Chief, General Serrano—who endure violent threats and even actual assaults on their Government institutions. Hundreds of honest, hard-working Colombians sacrificed their lives last year in the struggle against drug traffickers.

But, how can we assured of the Government's commitment against drug trafficking when the President himself almost surely benefited from the drug trade? The extent and level of official drug corruption in Colombia is the single most glaring failure —and the overriding reason I must recommend decertification.

President Ernesto Samper has been charged with accepting $6 million in campaign funds from the Cali cartel—and may soon be impeached because of it. In addition, at least 20 members of congress are also under investigation for accepting drug funds.

I have long stated that such official corruption cannot be tolerated. Even if a nation is overwhelmed by the horrible powers of international drug cartels, as long as their leaders remain committed to fighting these cartels they deserve our support. But, once a nation's leaders have fallen under the corrupt influence of the drug cartels, morality and practicality require that they cannot be given our support.

This has been my test for certification for years. In 1989, I voted to overrule President Bush's decision to certify the Bahamas. I believed then that the Bahamas should have been decertified because drug corruption had permeated the highest levels of their Government.

Let me also point out that the current leadership of Colombia has already been given the benefit of the doubt—given chances—given tests—but, ultimately, their leaders have failed. The Senate was first faced with reports of the Samper campaign's alleged connection to the Cali cartel during the summer of 1994. I and every Senator voted to condition U.S. aid on progress in fighting drug operations and corruption. But, with no clear evidence of corruption against Mr. Samper available at the time, this provision was dropped when the final foreign operations bill was negotiated with the House of Representatives.

At the time of President Samper's inauguration in August 1994, I and the majority of Senators voted against a measure to place further counter narcotics conditions on United States aid to Colombia. We voted, in effect, to give the new President time to demonstrate his commitment to fighting the drug cartels. President Samper personally assured me that he would remain faithful to the struggle against drugs. The evidence is clearer every day that he has not lived up to his word.

Last year's certification of Colombia on vital national interest grounds was the clearest possible—and first ever—official United States warning that the leaders of Colombia must remain absolutely free from the corrupt influence of the drug cartels. In response to this warning, we did see an unprecedented series of raids—Colombian authorities, cooperating with the of DEA, captured six leaders of the Cali cartel.

But just last month, one of those key traffickers walked out of prison and reliable reports indicate that the cartel kingpins who stayed in prison continue to run their drug operations from their plush prison cells.

Finally, and unpardonably, charges of corruption have coincided with a marked diminution of efforts to slow the drug trade—as last year Colombian seizures of cocaine decreased by 24 percent last year. And, supplies of Colombian heroin are also on the rise—becoming more pure, less expensive, and taking over the streets of America.

Even as I recommend decertification, I recognize that this issue can—under the law—be revisited during the coming year. The Samper government may soon be replaced. It may even prove that the charges of corruption are groundless.

So, let me be crystal clear. If a new Colombian Government demonstrates a commitment to fighting the drug cartels and an absolute freedom from corrupt influence of the drug cartels, then the United States should revisit the decertification decision. The Foreign Assistance Act allows the President to reconsider a decertification decision if there has been a fundamental change of government or a fundamental change in the reasons for decertification. A new government—free of the corrupt influence of the drug cartels—would be such a fundamental change.

But, until then, I cannot recommend to the President that he do anything other than decertify Colombia.

The story for Mexico is different than Colombia's—at least so far. The key difference is the antinarcotics leadership of the current Mexican administration. Still, the growing threat to the United States of drugs grown, produced, or traveling through Mexico is too serious for Mexico to be granted full certification. Therefore, the correct course to take this year with Mexico is the step we took last year with Colombia. In other words, we must send a warning—such as granting a national interest waiver.

Let me point out, Mexico's problems are in some ways the result of successes in interdiction in the transit zone—the Caribbean. Our success at pushing the drug traffickers out of the transit zone means that the drug cartels needed a new route—the natural choice is the overland route that passes directly through Mexico. This has been the key opportunity for Mexican traffickers to gain control more phases of cocaine operations. Reports from the field indicate that Mexican drug kingpins actually accept payments in the form of cocaine—1 free kilo from the Colombian kingpins for every kilo the Mexican traffickers smuggle to the United States.

This 2-for-1 sale has had such a severe impact that now more than two-thirds of all the cocaine in this country now comes through Mexico. And, it means that Mexican drug cartels are poised to become much richer, more powerful and more deadly than ever before. What is worse, all this is on top of longstanding Mexican trafficking in heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine, and one of the newest drugs of abuse—rohypnol.

Let me also point out that Mexico's large geographic size and their limited resources mean that fighting the drug traffic is simply an overwhelming task.

Last year, for example, we heard that traffickers landed fast-flying jumbo jets with multi-ton shipments of cocaine in rural Mexico. Sometimes using dry riverbeds or dirt roads as landing strips, obviously ruining these planes—literally abandoning planes worth upwards of $10 million . Of course, it's worth it to the drug cartels—these tons of cocaine are worth literally hundreds of millions of dollars. Such tactics seriously test the capacity of Mexico's anti-drug personnel and resources.

But with all these problems, I believe Mexico has a President who is on our side. President Zedillo has taken sincere and important steps on the drug front, including judicial reforms and the appointment of an attorney general who is from the opposition party dedicated to weeding out corruption. The recent arrest of Juan Abrego—leader of the Mexican gulf cartel—was an example of United States-Mexican cooperation.

Mexico's demonstrated leadership amidst the growing drug threat is the fundamental reason I do not propose decertification for Mexico. Frankly, if we destroy Mexico's moral, political or practical resolve against the drug traffickers we will only have succeeded in making a bad situation very much worse.

Still, in rejecting no-strings-attached full certification for Mexico, we must send a clear and strong warning that the Mexican drug trade must be a priority in our bilateral relations and that we expect results. Nevertheless, continued cooperation between the United States and Mexico on drugs is critical with such a close and important neighbor. Last year, we sent a warning to the Colombian government—they did not heed this warning—and this year I call for them to pay the price. This year, we must send a warning to the Mexican government—and if they do not heed it, they will pay the price.

We cannot expect a quick fix to the drug problem in Mexico. But we must be clear about areas where we think a strong, honest government can make a difference—starting with reforms in the institutions and laws that are both governable by their national leadership and vulnerable to the narcotics industry.

For example, more can and must be done to curb the problem of money laundering in Mexico's financial sector. More can and must be done to control precursor chemicals of methamphetamine, as Mexican traffickers become key players in the manufacturing and distribution of this drug. And, more can and must be done to work together to control the new challenge posed by the flow of rohypnol across the border.

In 1993, I supported the North American Free Trade Agreement—and vowed to monitor carefully how the agreement with Mexico was functioning. And last year, I did not protest when President Clinton decided to lend Mexico money to help alleviate the peso crisis. My call to end the full no-strings-attached certification for Mexico means that my continued support for NAFTA will depend in great measure on an aggressive Mexican response to the growing drug threat. In doing so, I am following the same prudent course I followed for Colombia—a clear warning, a chance to comply, with failure to comply resulting in action.

Mr. President, I understand that both Mexico and Colombia are making efforts in counter-narcotics—but the standard for certification is full cooperation. Given the massive scourge of drugs confronting us, it is in the interest of the United States to raise the

level of expectations and attention given to the drug trade by our southern neighbors. This is what the certification process allows, and this is what our Nation must do.

THE FUTURE OF THE NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, shortly after Christmas, the New York Times printed a very one-sided portrayal of the National Guard. In that article, a senior Defense Department official is quoted as saying, ''There's a lot of the Army National Guard that's just irrelevant to our strategy. It's kind of like a welfare program for weekend warriors. * * *''

Aside from being grossly inappropriate, the statement is simply not true. Change is inevitable—not just for the Guard but for this Nation's military structure as a whole. And, while the Guard is prepared to face those new challenges, as we go forward, I'll continue to be guided by my unequivocal support for the Guard and by the knowledge that the Guard is in no way the problem, but rather the key to the solution.

I can also assure my colleagues that some nameless, faceless bureaucrat who equates the Guard—with its stellar performances in the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Haiti, the Sinai, and Bosnia—to a handout, will not be determining the Guard's fate. Instead, the Guard, sitting down as equals with the Army, will determine that future.

That's the message I delivered a few weeks ago to the Adjutants General Conference, that's the message I delivered when the Governors met here for their annual meeting, and that's the message I bring to you today. Because when representatives of the National Guard sit down at the negotiating table with the Army, I intend for both the Governors and Congress to be solidly behind them.

Our common goal has been to maximize the Guard's role both during times of war and peace, and to assure the Guard is ready and accessible. That goal has not changed. But, we must assure that this goal can adapt to the changing global, economic, technological, and political environment. I think that the Guard's accomplishments put us in an excellent position as we head into this debate, and ask the question, ''What are the military needs of this country, and how can we best meet them?''

We've already proven we can conform to the changing global demands being placed on our military. In his State of the Union Address, President Clinton said, ''We can't be everywhere. We can't do everything. But where our interests and our values are at stake—and where we can make a difference—America must lead. We must not be isolationists or the world's policeman. But we can be its best peacemaker.''

The Guard has proven itself 100 percent as a necessary and vital part of America's peacekeeping force. Any discussions about the Guard's future must recognize the interdependability of the regular Army and the Guard, rather than continuing to see them as having separate missions.

The Air Force and Air Guard are a perfect example of how we can make this integration work. Serving anywhere around the globe, there is no distinction between these two Air Forces. They fly as one, they work as one, and they succeed as one.

Another issue often mentioned is the changing technology and its impact on our military makeup. Again, the Guard is keeping pace with the changing demands. I'll use this opportunity to brag on Kentucky a bit. Our western Kentucky training facility, in conjunction with the high-technology training available at Fort Knox, puts Kentucky and the National Guard at the forefront of this country's military training.

Last year, 16,000 soldiers trained there. But, those numbers represent just the beginning in a long line of soldiers who will receive the best, state-of-the-art training this country has to offer.

The Kentucky Guard is certainly not alone in its ability to adapt to new high-technology opportunities and demands. And, who better than our citizen-soldiers with their added professional skills, to meet the high-technology challenges of the future? We've seen how these additional skills constantly come into play—a chief of police providing the know-how to set up policing operations in Haiti is just one example—and we'll see it when the Guard uses its outside expertise for the high-technology military of the future.

In the end, Mr. President, our greatest pleasure comes from budget realities and growing fiscal restraints. Last year, we essentially had to go in and write the Guard's resource and training needs into the budget. But, our hard work paid off and our priority items—Air National Guard force structure, military technician manning and the Army Guard operating funding—survived.

This year, things will get even more difficult. And as General Baca conceded a few weeks ago, we'll not only have to confront the issue of force structure, we'll have to accept change. But, the Guard can be the architects of that change.

In drawing up the plans for that change, I think we should be guided by the Adjutants General Association president, General Lawson's words. As he said last September, ''We may need less military, but we don't need the military less.''

Assistant Secretary of Defense Deborah Lee is right on target when she points out that our units cost 25 to 75 percent of active-duty counterparts. ''Making greater use of the reservists makes good sense in an area of shrinking budgets. This means that instead of reducing the Reserve components in the same direct proportion as the active components, more use should be made of reservists to control peacetime costs and to minimize the risks associated with active drawdown.''

And that last point is very important. As the executive officer of a Cobra helicopter squadron put it, ''If you dissolve units like this, it would take years to rebuild that ability if you ever needed it again.''

Major General Philbin put it another way: ''Since few conflicts evolve as anticipated, where would those reserve component forces be found if the Guard combat divisions are deactivated? The Army Reserve? Not structured for combat. Another draft? No time, since the Pentagon pundits are forecasting, however unrealistically, conflicts that arise like lightning bolts and are successfully concluded in a flash.''

When we go to the table to hammer out a new covenant with the Army, we must bring to the table our willingness to see changes to force structure. But we shouldn't leave behind our commitment to a relevant, viable and ready Guard that maintains a balanced force of combat, combat support, and combat service support, along with an equal level of command support to maintain balance across the Nation. These items will not be negotiable.

We're at a crucial juncture that will have long-felt repercussions for the National Guard and the Nation as a whole. But I hope we've reached that juncture, with Congress behind the Guard, with the Governors behind the Guard, and most important, with the American people behind the Guard.

That's because the citizen-soldiers of the National Guard find their roots in the history of this country, but equally important, in the communities of this country.

If you look behind the words in the Guard's theme—''Capable, Accessible, Affordable''—what you'll find are average folks who've struggled through some of the worst disasters imaginable.

They understand that taken together, these three words define with simplicity and clarity, the important dual Federal-State function of our National Guard, the decisive role they've played in our Nation's history, and will play in our Nation's future.

And taken together, they decree what the Guard has been, what they can be, and what they will be.

Mr. President, I look forward to working with my colleagues to assure that the Guard continues to play a major role in this Nation's military structure and mission.

CHARACTER COUNTS RESOLUTION, SENATE RESOLUTION 226

Mr. NUNN. Mr. President, yesterday, I joined with my distinguished colleague Senator DOMENICI, in submitting Senate Resolution 226. This resolution which, I strongly support, would designate the week of October 13–19, 1996, as the third annual National Character Counts Week.